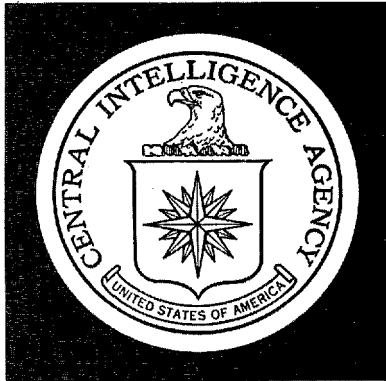


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[Vietnam: The Communists stepped up their mortar and rocket attacks against allied military installations over the weekend, while ground fighting was mostly limited to small-unit encounters.

Early on 23 December, the allied complex at Da Nang was shelled, wounding ten Marines. Eleven civilians were killed and 19 wounded. About 30 122-mm. rockets were fired at the Pleiku airfield.

The airfield at Chu Lai was hit by three separate light rocket attacks on 20-21 December, making a total of five such attacks there in five days. Casualties and damage were reported to be light. In addition, seven South Vietnamese were killed when eight mortar rounds hit the provincial capital of Quang Tri city.

Most ground clashes over the weekend resulted from allied sweeps in III Corps. In the heaviest single action, however, an enemy force of undetermined size launched a mortar and ground attack against an American field unit in southern Tay Ninh Province. Allied reinforcements killed 81 of the attackers and recovered 33 enemy weapons. In the delta, scattered ground clashes accounted for at least 160 Viet Cong killed. [] (Map)]

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Nigeria: The federal government's announcement of a unilateral two-day cease-fire in the civil war seems unlikely to lead to a prolonged, general cease-fire or to peace negotiations.

The federal cease-fire, which was to be in effect on the Moslem holiday on 21 December and on Christmas Day, was probably a move to offset growing international pressures for peace talks, mainly from the UK and from Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie who has appealed for a one-week truce. Observance of the cease-fire by federal troops in the field is by no means assured, and one press report indicates that Nigerian Air Force planes bombed the Biafran administrative center of Umuahia on 21 December.

An unconfirmed report from Umuahia indicates that Biafran leader Ojukwu has ordered his troops not to attack except in self-defense from 23 December to 31 December, probably in an effort to score another propaganda victory over the federal authorities.

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NOTE

USSR-Egypt: Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko arrived in Cairo on 21 December for a "brief visit" designed to reaffirm Moscow's support for the Arab bargaining position vis-a-vis Israel. Deputy Foreign Minister Semenov accompanied Gromyko in an effort to quiet possible Egyptian fears regarding Semenov's recent discussions with the Israeli ambassador to the UN. Semenov, according to Israeli accounts, told the ambassador, however, that Moscow still insists that Israeli agreement to withdraw is a precondition to any settlement in the Middle East. Gromyko and Semenov can also be expected to urge the Arabs to continue seeking a political settlement.

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